

General de Gaulle

25 May 1959

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Dear Mr. President:

Dear General Eisenhower:

In view of the friendship which unites our two countries and in view of our personal friendship, I think it would be well if I were to define for you the spirit and the substance of certain measures which France has just decided upon relating to her defense and which go beyond the framework of our present common organization. I am sure you will understand and appreciate the reasons which have led her to these.



But before all else, I wish to tell you that I have never been more convinced that in the present situation the alliance of the free nations is absolutely necessary. The government, the parliament, and the people of France in their immense majority, believe, as I do myself, that in the face of the ambitions and strength of the Soviets and foreseeing what may be the power and imperialism of enormous totalitarian China, and bearing in mind the facilities which the Communist undertakings find in primitive, anarchic or poverty stricken areas, it is essential that the nations which enjoy modern civilization and true democracy remain united to act and to defend themselves. As far as France is concerned, unless she is to succumb some day alone in the advance guard, she

belongs without doubt in the camp of freedom. This is to tell you that in taking certain measures in her own behalf which are not "integrated" within NATO, France does not wish to change our alliance.

Nevertheless, the fact is that this alliance has no common policy other than the direct security of Western Europe. Thus, it is that in the East, the Mediterranean, North Africa, and Black Africa, Americans, Englishmen and Frenchmen adopt attitudes and undertake actions which are quite different. If this is indeed so, how could we conduct in these areas, a strategy which would be common for all of us?



It so happens that the threat from our opponents is now aimed at everything which is Oriental or African. As France is immediately affected she is presently brought to take certain measures which arise from her responsibilities.

For this reason, without anything being changed in France's participation in NATO for Continental Europe, a French command of the Mediterranean, having as its area of responsibility the whole of that Sea as well as North Africa, is about to be set up. This command will receive its missions from the French Government. It is self-evident that our government proposes to study and to settle either with Washington and London or with NATO, according to the

case, the conditions under which we could cooperate in this area with whatever might be undertaken by our allies, and vice versa.

At the same time, a French command is charged, for France and the Community, with the defense of Black Africa. We would be quite willing for this command to combine its plans with those of the African states and Western countries who find themselves, like the French, threatened by Soviet activities in this vast part of Africa. Similarly, we are prepared to undertake and practice cooperation in possible theaters in the Indian Ocean and in the Pacific.



Furthermore, may I call your attention to the fact that atomic weapons and the conditions under which these weapons might be used require France to take certain precautions. Obviously the question would appear quite differently if you had made it possible for us to take advantage of your own achievements. But America intends to keep her secrets, vis a vis France. This compels us to discover them ourselves and at tremendous cost. On this point, however, we have nothing other to express than regret. This is not the case insofar as America reserves to herself the total decision to use or not to use the nuclear weapons which she has. The consequences which might result for us, from any unilateral action which you might undertake in this area, lead us to formulate explicit requests and to adopt,

insofar as possible, certain measures on our own behalf as safeguards.

If there were no alliance between us, I would agree that your monopoly on the opening of atomic war would be justified, but you and we are tied together to such a point that the opening of this type of hostilities either by you or against you would automatically expose France to total and immediate destruction. She obviously cannot entirely entrust her life or her death to any other state whatsoever, even the most friendly. For this reason, France feels it is essential that she participate, if the case were to arise, in any decision which might be taken by her allies to use atomic missiles or to launch them against certain places at certain times. Until she has been able to conclude with the United States and with Great Britain the agreements which seem necessary to her on this subject, she cannot consent to such projectiles being stored on her territory and used from there unless she herself has complete and permanent control over them.



As I have had occasion to write to you previously, I believe that these problems might be solved between us as soon as there has been established between the United States and Great Britain and France organized cooperation in political matters and in strategic matters for the security of the world. I believe that our alliance would be more firm and more active as between itself and others.

I sincerely hope that general circumstances and our own personal circumstances will enable me to examine with you as soon as possible these questions which are vital for our two countries and for the world. If by good fortune you were to come one day to France, I can assure you that you would be the object both from the government and all parts of the population of an enthusiastic and unprecedented welcome. You would receive a massive unmistakable mark of the friendship and confidence of the French people and this would certainly have important consequences throughout Europe and in the entire world.

Please believe, my dear General Eisenhower, my feelings of highest consideration and faithful friendship.

Charles de Gaulle



In the last hours of the life of John Foster Dulles, whose condition, I know, causes you deep sorrow, my thoughts go out to him who with all his gallantry and all his ardor has so well served the West.